

(First Draft)

**An Impact Evaluation of SEARRAG:
Toward Institutionalization and Sustainability**

Conducted Jointly
by the
UNDP Asia and Pacific Programme for
Development Training and Communication Planning
Southeast Asia Research Review and Advisory Group
International Development Research Center

September 1991

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Executive Summary	1
Introduction	3
Objectives	4
Framework	5
Definition of Terms	6
Methods and Procedures	7
Findings	
Historical Background	12
Educational Research Environment	14
Problems of Educational Research	15
Aims and Objectives of SEARRAG	16
Guiding Principles of SEARRAG	17
Roles and Accomplishments	18
Effectiveness of SEARRAG's Mechanism	21
Efficiency of SEARRAG's Operation	23
Utilization of SEARRAG's Outputs	24
Strengths and Weaknesses of SEARRAG	25
Institutionalization and Sustainability of SEARRAG	27
Summary and Conclusion	32
Recommendations	34

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For almost a decade now, SEARRAG has slowly but surely pursued its aims and objectives. Although for sometime it research generation, it soon went back to research review and dissemination. Today, SEARRAG has attained some outstanding achievements without much fanfare the most significant of which is the attitudinal change among its members.

SEARRAG has apparently forged a strong sense of understanding, cooperation and belongingness among member researchers, policy makers and practitioners, very rarely seen in international bodies. The organization achieved this through annual meetings, workshops and dialogues where the members are given the opportunity to share, discuss and clarify research findings, exchange ideas on research needs and priorities, and identify research areas of crucial importance for policy making, planning and practice.

Among the most significant tangible achievements of SEARRAG are its studies on the educational research environment in Southeast Asia; and the review of the state-of-the-practice and the state-of-the-art of educational research in the region and in its member countries. The organization has produced these valuable materials with the least cost by harnessing the expertise of members and their influence on staff.

SEARRAG should now repackage the available data to strengthen the role and impact of educational research in policy-making, planning and practice. To do this, SEARRAG should now: a) produce materials designed for policy makers, planners and practitioners; b) establish a more systematic dissemination system to reach more intended readers; and c) conduct training programs on data utilization for policy making, planning and practice.

To broaden the impact of SEARRAG, it should harness the support of the mass media in the member countries. It should also broaden its network with organizations composed of educational policy makers, planners, researchers and practitioners. Further, it should expand its affiliate members at the country level. It should link up and co-sponsor special events with other government and private agencies.

SEARRAG, as a legal entity, may choose to maintain in its present status as a non-stock, non-profit, non-governmental organization. However, to ensure its institutionalization process, it should strive to establish a more stable funding source. One option is to solicit funds from bilateral, multilateral and government sources. These funds could be invested as endowment fund and only the interest should be used for the operation of SEARRAG. At the same time, it should continue to design projects for funding by other sources.

Its sustainability could be largely influenced by its organizational structure. The present structure of SEARRAG is composed of a Council which is the governing body of the organization. The Council should be headed by a chairperson. There should be a Secretariat that will be responsible for maintaining an efficient staff who will act on the requirements of the Council.

The Secretariat should be headed by an Executive Director to take charge of the administration, direction and supervision of the Secretariat. The Executive Director will receive instructions from the Council through the chairperson in the implementation of the Council's policies and decisions.

INTRODUCTION

X This study was originally designed to evaluate the impact of the research utilization project of the Southeast Asian Research Review and Advisory Group (SEARRAG) funded by the International Development Research Council (IDRC) of Canada. However, after meeting with members of SEARRAG and some staff of IDRC in May 1991, it was realized that their underlying interest was the institutionalization and sustainability of the organization. While retaining the original objectives, the study was expanded to accommodate the interest of the concerned parties.

SEARRAG was established in 1982. Its main objective is to gather and review significant educational research studies and ensure the effective dissemination and utilization of the research findings.

In 1985, SEARRAG received an IDRC grant (3-P-85-0053) for a second set of review and advisory activities. The grant was used to finance reviews of research and practice.

In 1989, SEARRAG created a regional bibliographic database known as Southeast Asian Bibliographic and Abstracting Services (SEABAS). This became the major commitment of SEARRAG after realizing the wealth of educational research that have been carried out in each country in the region (Ghani, 19__).

From its inception, SEARRAG has been mainly concerned with research utilization rather than research generation. However, in 1987, an external evaluation of SEARRAG found that the organization had strayed into research and program evaluation activities and had failed to build strong research review and advisory structures at the national level. In effect, SEARRAG became the most active and effective educational research in Southeast Asia (Sendut, 1987).

During Phase II, SEARRAG went back to its original mandate, namely that of compiling and reviewing educational research in fields where there are important policy issues in SEARRAG countries. Furthermore, SEARRAG was expected to develop a more organized and sustainable mechanism for conducting cycles of research identification, abstracting, review, dissemination and utilization.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to determine the impact of the SEARRAG research utilization project on educational policies, plans, research and practice in Southeast Asia and the efficiency and effectiveness of the systems and structures employed by SEARRAG in performing its roles and attaining its objectives. The ultimate objective is to propose options for its institutionalization and sustainability as an educational research review and advisory organization. The specific objectives are:

1. To determine the role and accomplishments of SEARRAG in national educational policy, planning, research and practice;
2. To determine the role and accomplishments of SEARRAG in regional and international networking activities;
3. To determine the role played by SEARRAG in IDRC's support of educational research and research capacity-building in the region;
4. To examine the effectiveness of the SEARRAG mechanism (structure, program of work, decision-making processes, etc.) in accomplishing objectives 1-3 above.
5. To determine the present status of SEABAS information system as it relates to hardware and software handling, adherence to common bibliographic tools/standards, input-output processes, quality of indexing/abstracting, staff's capability in their various responsibilities;
6. To determine the present status of SEARRAG's national SEABAS components including national networking and dissemination activities;
7. To determine the operational efficiency of SEARRAG in documentation and dissemination of educational research;
8. To determine the utilization of SEARRAG's disseminated outputs such as the state-of-art/practice reviews, bibliographic products (abstracts, bibliographic, tapes, diskettes, computer printouts) and newsletter;
9. To determine the strengths and weaknesses of SEARRAG and SEABAS and recommend ways, and means for institutionalizing and sustaining their operations.

FRAMEWORK

This study focuses on the status and the future direction of SEARRAG and SEABAS as an organization engaged in educational research documentation, dissemination and utilization for the Southeast Asian region. Specifically, the study looks into SEARRAG's and SEABAS':

- Historical background
- Research environment
- Aims and objectives
- Roles and accomplishments
- Effectiveness of management
- Efficiency of operation
- Utilization of outputs
- Strengths and weaknesses

Based on the results of the study specific recommendations for its institutionalization and sustainability are presented.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The key factors or concepts which are central to the proposed study are operationally defined below:

1. Management refers to the process of analyzing, planning, staffing, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating projects and activities.
2. Operation refers to the process of putting the planned activities into action. This is also known as implementation.
3. Efficiency refers to the timeliness in producing the expected outputs relative to the workplan.
4. Effectiveness refers to the attainment of a set of objectives of an organization.
5. Documentation refers to the process of collating, processing and packaging of the research data for dissemination.
6. Dissemination refers to the process of passing on the resource materials to the intended users.
7. Utilization refers to the process of applying the information in the resource materials in making decisions and actions.
8. Impact refers to the changes in structure or relationship among the staff brought about by the information.
9. Institutionalization refers to the process of transforming an organization into a legal entity or a permanent structure within an existing agency.
10. Sustainability refers to the state at which an organization is ensured of financial viability and operational continuity.

METHODS, TOOLS, AND PROCEDURES

The evaluation used a combination of social research methods in gathering the data. Personal interviews, participant observation, and mailed survey questionnaires were employed to gather information from selected members of SEARRAG, paper writers, disseminators, and users of the organization's outputs. The users included policy makers, planners, researchers, teachers, and paper writers.

Content analysis was employed in examining selected materials distributed by SEARRAG and cited as useful in policy making, planning, research, training, teaching, materials development, and/or formulation of educational strategies, approaches, methods, and curricula.

Interview schedule was used in gathering data from key respondents. Mailed questionnaires were used to gather data from selected sample research results users. The respondents were taken from a list of recipients of materials provided by SEARRAG. Content analysis, was employed in analyzing the available materials.

The questionnaire focused on educational research data documentation, dissemination, and utilization. The form for the content analysis looked into the contents and format of the materials on educational research environment, language education, and action research in the different ASEAN countries. It also quoted passages which provide evidence on the use of the materials.

Upon approval of the project by IDRC and SEARRAG, UNDP/DTCP developed and discussed the questionnaires, guide questions, and content analysis form with representatives of the two organizations. Upon approval, limited copies of the tools were reproduced and pretested.

Based on the pretest results, the tools for gathering data were revised and enough copies were reproduced for actual data gathering in the six ASEAN member countries.

The data was organized, analyzed, interpreted, and reported to SEARRAG and IDRC. After the first draft has been prepared, copies were be sent to SEARRAG and IDRC for verification and validation. The draft report was further discussed in a meeting in Penang, Malaysia on 19-21 August 1991.

The final evaluation report was prepared after taking into consideration the relevant suggestions of SEARRAG and IDRC during the meeting.

Shown in the next page is a table on the key factors and indicators studied and the methods and sources of data.

KEY FACTORS, INDICATORS AND METHODS/SOURCES OF DATA

Key Factors	Key Indicators	Methods and Sources of Data
Objective 1		
1) <u>Roles</u> of SEARRAG in national educational policy, planning, research, and practice.	• Reported role of SEARRAG in policy making, planning, research and practice: e.g., adviser, reviewer, organizer, etc.	• Survey of key educational policy makers, planners, researchers and teachers in each member-country.
2. <u>Accomplishments</u> of SEARRAG in national educational policy, planning, research and practice.	• Number of available policies, plans, research reports, curricula and lesson plans developed with assistance from SEARRAG or using materials of SEARRAG.	• Interviews with policy makers, planners, researchers and teachers in each member-country.
Objective 2		
1) <u>Role</u> of SEARRAG in regional and international networking activities.	• Reported role of SEARRAG in regional and international networking activities: e.g., initiator, leader, organizer, trainor, etc.	• Survey of network member institutions at the regional and international networks.

2. Accomplishments of SEARRAG in regional and international networking activities.

- Number of educational institutions at the regional level which are now members of the network initiated by SEARRAG (by year).
- Number of staff manning the data-base developed by SEARRAG (by year).
- Contributions of SEARRAG to the international network.

• Interviews with institutions of the regional network.

• Review of inventory of staff including their competence.

• Interviews with international network management and analyses of reports of the international network.

Objective 3

1) Role of SEARRAG in IDRC's support of educational research capacity building in the region.

- Reported role of SEARRAG in IDRC's support of educational research.
- Reported role of SEARRAG in research-capacity building in the region.

• Interviews with selected IDRC staff.

• Survey of educational institutions which were assisted by SEARRAG in research capacity building.

Objective 4

1) Effectiveness of SEARRAG mechanism (structure, work program, decision making, etc.) in accomplishing its role and objectives.

- Report on effectiveness of the SEARRAG structure
- Comparison of planned outputs and actual accomplishments.
- Report on effectiveness of decision-making.

• Interview with SEARRAG management.

• Review of plant outputs and list of actual accomplishments.

• Interviews with management and staff of SEARRAG.

Objective 5

1) Status of SEARRAG's SEABAS information system such as: hardware and software handling; bibliographic tools and standards; inputs-outputs processes; quality of indexing and abstracting; staff capability.

- Description of the different components of the SEARRAG's SEABAS information system and rating of some components based on certain regional or international standards.

- Interview with SEARRAG staff in charge of hardware and software handling.
- Review of bibliographic tools and standards
- Observation of processes
- Content analysis of index and abstracts

Objective 6

1) Status of SEARRAG's national SEABAS components, national net-working, dissemination activities.

- Existing components; planned components; members in the networking; problem and solution to dissemination activities.

- Interview with the coordinator and other staff involved in the networking and dissemination activities.

Objective 7

1) Operational efficiency in documentation and dissemination of educational research .

- Speed in the production of outputs such as the documentation of the materials and their dissemination relative to the planned schedule.

- Interview with the coordinator and other staff involved in the documentation and dissemination of the materials.

Objective 8

1) Utilization of SEARRAG's dissemination outputs such as state of the art/practice, reviews, bibliographic products, etc.

- Number of recipients who used each material; their assessment of the various aspects of the materials; etc.

- Interview or sent questionnaire to recipients of the materials.

Objective 9

1) Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for building and sustaining SEARRAG program of work and mechanism.

- Reported strengths and weaknesses of the SEARRAG program and structure
- Recommendations of SEARRAG management, staff and beneficiaries to strengthen the organization

- Interviews with selected SEARRAG's staff and management.
- Use of questionnaire to get recommendation of beneficiaries.

FINDINGS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Southeast Asian Research Review and Advisory Group (SEARRAG) grows out of the need for a regional organization that will collate, synthesize, document, disseminate and utilize educational research in the region.

In 1976, the International Development Research Center (IDRC) of Canada supported the formation of an International Research Review and Advisory Group (RRAG) composed of researchers in education from both the developed and developing countries and some officers of a number of donor agencies (Ghani, 1991).

The Bellagio Education Group, an informal group of donor agencies, encouraged the formation of the RRAG in response to the growing concern about the lack of information about research that had been carried out in the Less Developed Countries (LDCs).

According to Ghani (1991), IDRC supported the formation of RRAG as an attempt to organize a mechanism through which the LDCs could:

- influence the setting of their research priorities;
- strengthen the relationship between research and policy making in education;
- inform the educational community about the state of educational research in the LDCs; and
- be assisted to secure funding for research which are relevant to their needs.

RRAG succeeded in attracting prominent researchers from the LDCs who have close links with decision making in their countries. It has also succeeded in carrying out activities such as review of the state of education research (state-of-art) in the LDCs (Ghani, 1991).

However, in spite of its success, some RRAG members from LDCs realized the need to organize the regional RRAG. Finally, in the 1982 RRAG Meeting in Jamaica, a proposal was made to IDRC that RRAG should be regionalized so that its activities should be more responsive to the region (Ghani, 1991).

One of the international RRAG members who strongly felt the need to organize a regional RRAG was Dr. Pote Sapanchai of Thailand. Immediately after the Jamaica meeting, Dr. Sapanchai approached IDRC and prepared the establishment of a RRAG-type group in Southeast Asia. IDRC agreed and encouraged Dr. Sapanchai to consult some of the prominent educators in the region.

In October 1982, a small meeting held in Bangkok funded by IDRC marked the birth of the SEARRAG. Prominent educators from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand participated in the meeting. The participants immediately accepted the idea of a regional RRAG.

To test the viability of the newly-organized group, the participants assigned themselves a task namely the commissioning of national studies on ~~the~~ educational research environment. Although the task took along time to accomplish, it proved to be a valuable test of SEARRAG's viability as a regional organization.

By 1984, SEARRAG felt more confident to take on more activities. A plan of action was formulated which included such activities as "state-of-the-art" and "state-of-the-practice" reviews, research abstracting and clearinghouse functions. The plan was submitted to IDRC and was funded for a two-year cycle.

In 1987, at the end of the funding cycle, an external evaluation of SEARRAG was conducted with financial support from IDRC. The evaluation results was generally very positive and supportive of SEARRAG. The study recommended that SEARRAG should continue to concentrate its effort on the dissemination and utilization of educational research data (Ghani, 1991).

Based on the evaluation results, IDRC continued the funding of SEARRAG for another cycle, this time for three years on condition that the organization legalize itself. Legalization was necessary to facilitate the awarding of funds to SEARRAG. As an organization, IDRC can only provide funds to organization with legal personality.

In response to IDRC's requirement, SEARRAG was registered in Malaysia as a non-profit organization or corporation. Also, it committed itself to carry out two major activities such as the selection and commissioning of "State-of-the-art" reviews and the organization and administration of a regional educational abstracting service (Ghani, 1991).

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

The Southeast Asian social, cultural, political and economic spheres constitute the broad environment of educational research in the region. The past two decades show a significant economic and political buoyancy and rapid institutional growth in the region. This positive development has influenced education in the area.

In education, the Southeast Asian region has reached an average of 70% adult literacy and attained near universal primary education. Tertiary education has expanded rapidly while research institutions have been established and staffed with young researchers with graduate degrees from Western and Asian universities. Governments and non-government organizations have shown increasing interest on research as input to pragmatic policy making and comprehensive state planning (Gopinathan and Neilsen 1988).

Despite the rapid growth of research institutions and outputs in the region, incentives for research productivity are still limited. Researchers complain of inadequate funds, strong government control, few intangible rewards and little collegial cooperation (Gopinathan and Neilsen 1988).

Researchers in education is generally intended to examine decisions already made and to suggest improvements rather than raise fundamental questions. This orientation runs counter to Western norms of critical inquiry that academic researchers seem to prefer (Gopinathan and Nielsen 1988).

The predominant paradigm in educational research employed in ASEAN countries today is the positivistic, quantitative data analysis approach, using survey methods and computer-assisted statistical analysis indicating the profound influence of American graduate degree programmes (Gopinathan and Nielsen 1988).

The basic research infrastructure at the regional and national levels are already laid down. However, educational research capabilities differ in varying degrees from country to country. Apparently manpower development on educational research is needed.

Although there is a vast amount of researcher in education which have already been conducted in the ASEAN countries, most of these studies are very limited in scope probably because these were conducted only to meet degree requirements. Individual researcher initiated research outputs are few because of lack of local financial support, low individual skills and competencies.

The most apparent need in educational research in the region is clear linkages and sharing of research findings among educational researchers and collegial relationship among researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

PROBLEMS OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

An organization to be relevant and responsive must address the problems relating to its areas of concern. Logically, the problems should become the basis for formulating the organization's objectives and identifying its activities. SEARRAG's objectives and activities are designed to solve the major problems facing educational research in the region which include the following (SEARRAG):

1. Lack of information about the vast amount of researches in education which have already been conducted in the countries in the region among researchers, policy makers and practitioners.
2. Lack of comprehensive qualitative and policy-oriented type of researches in the region. A large proportion of available researches are quantitative in nature, with emphasis on survey and empirical approaches.
3. Very little apparent impact of researches on policy-making and on educational practice, except for some "commissioned or assigned" research.
4. Very few signs of the existence of a viable and healthy research community and lack of regional forums, associations, awards and collaborative research.
5. Lack of incentives and encouragement for research productivity in the region. The "publish or perish" environment does not yet exist in most research communities. Critical inquiry in most of the countries in the region is still perceived as being a risky venture.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of SEARRAG have evolved out of constant reflections and discussions with regards to the research environment, problems, needs and priorities of the members and recommendations of the external evaluation.

The aim of SEARRAG is to promote cooperation among educational researchers, policy makers and practitioners in the Southeast Asian Nations through networking, linkages, and sharing of experiences and knowledge in the field of educational research to ensure the increased contributions of research results to educational policy and practice, and thereby to national and regional development. In specific terms, the objectives of SEARRAG are as follow:

1. To review periodically the stage of development of the educational research in the Southeast Asian region and its contribution to educational policy-makers and practitioners.
2. To be a forum where policy-makers, practitioners and researchers may have the opportunity to pool and exchange information on research needs and priorities, to identify areas of common and divergent interests, exchange and clarify ideas along common themes and priorities for national needs.
3. To be a catalyst in initiating work along common themes whether within the country and/or within the region, and strengthen the role and impact of research in decision-making by involving policy-makers, practitioners and researchers in SEARRAG-like activities
4. To play an advisory role whether as a group or as individuals when called upon to do so, to assist in the identification of expertise and researchers in the region as references for government or private agencies within or outside the region.
5. To support the development of both intra and international research-practitioner communities and disseminate research findings to policy-makers and practitioners aimed at:
 - a) ease of understanding and implementation;
 - b) creating a sense of mutual understanding and commitment to the development of education, and improvement of educational practice.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF SEARRAG

1. SEARRAG will preserve its autonomy, flexibility and informality at all times.
2. SEARRAG will limit its activities to those which will promote its purpose and objectives.
3. SEARRAG will not be involved or participate. Knowingly or unknowingly, in any political activities.
4. SEARRAG will not participate or interfere in any internal affairs of member countries.

ROLES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Based on its objectives, SEARRAG is expected to perform the following roles, namely:

1. Reviewer of the stage of development of educational research in Southeast Asia;
2. Forum for policy-makers, practitioners and researchers;
3. Catalyst in initiating work along common themes;
4. Adviser to government or private agencies;
5. Support to the development of research practitioner communities; and
6. Disseminates of research findings to policy-makers and practitioners.

During the last eight-years of its existence, SEARRAG has performed, in varying degrees, these different roles

National Level

SEARRAG continues to provide forums for policy makers, researchers and practitioners from the different participating countries in the region. These forums, which were instrumental in establishing a network among the these groups are done through annual meetings, workshops and dialogues.

SEARRAG has also played the role of a reviewer of the stage of development of educational research in the different participating countries. As a reviewer, its first significant accomplishment along this line is a book on Educational Research Environment in Southeast Asia, a collection of the educational research environment in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand and an overview of the educational research environment in Southeast Asia.

The book is the first set of research activities that were carried out by SEARRAG. It describes the state-of-the-art of educational research in the ASEAN countries and the socio-economic and political environment which could influence the process in which educational research is conducted.

In addition to the impressive book, SEARRAG has also produced various kinds of research reviews such as: a) reviews of research literature (state-of-the-art reviews, and b) reviews of education practices (state-of-the-practice reviews). The specific reviews are:

State of the Practice Reports

1. State-of-the Practice of Values Education in Indonesia

2. State-of-the Practice of Values Education in Malaysia
3. State-of-the Practice of Values Education in Philippines
4. State-of-the Practice of Values Education in Thailand
5. State-of-the Practice of Values Education in Singapore
6. State-of-the Practice of Raising Achievement Levels of Elementary School Children (Malaysia)

State-of-the Art Reports

1. State-of-the-Art of Language Education in Malaysia
2. State-of-the-Art of English Language Education in Singapore
3. State-of-the-Art of Technical and Vocational Education in Thailand

Regional Level

SEARRAG's participation at international and regional meetings served to strengthen networking across regions. This also allows SEARRAG to keep up to date on the latest developments in the areas of educational research documentation, dissemination and utilization. SEARRAG's participation was intensified during the first phase of the project with funding from IDRC and other agencies. The meetings attended were:

1. RRAG Coordinators Meeting, Stockholm, Sweden, October 1985 (with funding support from SIDA-SAREC, Sweden).
2. CIDE-REDUC Evaluation Meeting, Santiago, Chile, January 1986 (with funding support from NORAD, Norway).
3. REDUC Evaluation Meeting, Washington, D.C., October 1986.
4. Second Meeting of ERNESA, Manzini, Swaziland, March 1987.
5. RRAG Coordinators' Meeting, Ottawa, Canada, October 1987.

SEARRAG also conducted an external evaluation of the two regional education organizations which have had associate membership, RECSAM and INNOTECH. Furthermore, SEARRAG provided advisory assistance to INNOTECH in selecting an external evaluation for one of its projects (SEARRAG Document 3-P-87-0207).

IDRC Support

In 1987, IDRC asked SEARRAG to review a document entitled "The Social Services Division in Southeast Asia: An Evaluation and Prospect for the Future

Education Program." This review helped IDRC in developing its new program of work for 1988-1989.

(The evaluators will gather information from IDRC about the performance of the new program. This will be included in the final report).

EFFECTIVENESS OF SEARRAG'S MECHANISM

Structure

SEARRAGs' structure is composed of three organs:

1. Council which consists of all full members
2. Coordinators who are full members of the country assigned with the responsibility of coordinating SEARRAG for the term.
3. Secretariat whose functions are defined by the coordinators.

Council

The Council is expected to perform the following functions:

1. Determine the policies and main line of work of SEARRAG, review and approve Plan-of-Operations.
2. Decide on invitations for associate memberships, by consensus.
3. Assign the two full members of a country to be responsible for the coordination of SEARRAG activities for a period of three years.
4. Designate the location of the next annual meeting and the dates of the meeting

Coordinators

The coordinators are expected to perform the following functions:

1. Follow up projects conducted by SEARRAG;
2. Administer budget for the period;
3. Draft the next Plan-of-Operation and seek funding for it;
4. Perform clearinghouse functions for all members;
5. Liaise with all members during the period;
6. Keep records on and update the list of full and associate membership;
7. Set up a Secretariat to assist the Coordinators in all functions;
8. Represent SEARRAG at international and regional meetings;
9. Prepare and circulate for advance discussion the agenda for the annual meeting;

10. Prepare and circulate in advance the Coordinator's Report for presentation at the annual meeting.

SEARRAG has not yet specified the expected functions of the Secretariat at this writing. Recommendations on the functions of the Secretariat are discussed under institutionalization.

SEARRAG is managed by Coordinators, who are full members, on rotation basis. Originally, the system was that a full member is elected at each annual meeting to become the coordinator for one year.

The coordinator is expected to coordinate the activities of SEARRAG on a part time basis outside of the normal work, using available facilities in his own institution (Ghani 1991).

As SEARRAG activities and commitments increased, a new system of management evolved. Coordination became a country rather than a member responsibility. The term of the Coordinator was extended from one year to three years (Ghani 1991).

With these new arrangements, the increasing workload could be shared among the full members in the country and the extension of their term allow them to finish activities started during their stint as coordinator.

The present regional Coordinator of SEARRAG revealed that management of the organization has grown easier and better during the last eight years. It must be recalled that during the first phase of the IDRC-funded project (1985-1987), IDRC itself administered the financial aspect of SEARRAG. However, during the second phase (1988-1991), SEARRAG had taken responsibility of the financial management.

The Coordinator also noted that asking members to do what they were expected to do for the good of the organization was getting easier. For example, the shift of the SEABAS in Indonesia to the Management Information System was due to the suggestions of the Regional Coordinators of SEARRAG and SEABAS. The matter of location of the national collecting centre in the Philippines was finalized with the office of the National Research and Testing Center of DECS as the national center and the Philippine Association for Graduate Education to assist in collecting materials from the private sector.

EFFICIENCY OF SEARRAG'S OPERATION

Efficiency usually means finishing the expected activity or output on time. A plan is used as basis for determining the timeliness of an activity or output.

SEARRAG uses a Plan-of-Operation for scheduling its activities or outputs. Almost all the publications that it produced were finished beyond the deadline specified in the Plan-of-Operation. For example, regional publications take too much time to finish. Science education materials took about two years to complete. One of the bottlenecks is the unavailability of educational research.

Deadline for producing outputs is generally based on the forthcoming SEARRAG meeting where the completed publications are normally presented to the Council members. Paper writers could not strictly follow deadline because they are told that SEARRAG work is supposed to be done outside of the regular office hour.

The process in writing a SEARRAG paper usually follows these steps:

1. Coordinator attends the mini-meeting on the writing of the paper.
2. Coordinator organizes writing team in his institution.
3. Team recruit writers from different units when needed.
4. Team collects available research materials.
5. Team abstract collected materials.
6. Team may ask some authors to write abstracts of their respective studies.
7. Team members write the papers.
8. Country coordinator presents papers to SEARRAG members during the meeting.

The paper writers gave a number of suggestions to improve the efficiency of SEARRAG operations. These include the following: provide more specific guidelines on the focus of the papers; provide time to write during office hours; give honorarium to paper writers; assign people to collect original research materials to be reviewed.

UTILIZATION OF SEARRAG'S OUTPUTS

The utilization of SEARRAG's outputs is the final determinant of its success as a research review and advisory organization. Unless used, these materials will run short of accomplishing their impact on the target users.

The use of materials is largely influenced by its content and format. Different intended readers differ in their priorities. For example, the researcher prefers to read long detailed materials which include every details of the methodology. On the other hand, policy makers want to use only the conclusion and recommendations.

Content analyses of the available SEARRAG materials show that these are more suited to researchers than to policy makers and practitioners. Therefore, the use of these material beyond the researchers is expected to be very limited, at this point in time.

To know whether the paper writers were conscious about their intended readers, they were asked about this during the interview. They said that their intended readers are graduate students, teachers, researchers and policy makers., However, they admitted that their materials are not suited to policy makers and practitioners.

The survey conducted among the recipients of SEARRAG materials show very low percentage of return. So far, only 19 completed questionnaires out of the more than 100 sent out came back. Less than half of those who sent back their questionnaires reported that they received some SEARRAG materials such as the SEARRAG Bulletin, Values Education in the Philippines, English Language Education in Singapore, among others. The most mentioned materials were for planning, policy formulation and development of resource materials. The rest said they do not know about SEARRAG and they did not receive any materials from the organization.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF SEARRAG

SEARRAG possesses a number of strengths and weaknesses, some of which are already known to the members and paper writers.

Strengths

The most prominent strengths of SEARRAG are:

1. Depth and wealth of experience in research review and advisory activities.
2. Highly competent members.
3. Favorable working conditions where members work on their own pace.
4. Members could depend on each other as support system - emotional, professional, social, friends.
5. Organization could invite top policy makers.
6. There is a real need for SEARRAG as an organization.

Weaknesses

The most serious weaknesses of SEARRAG are the following:

- ① It is virtually unknown to policy makers and practitioners who are not members of the organization.
2. It is not well-known even to paper writers.
- ③ Lack of sustained financial support.
4. Lack of facilities which could serve as its own office.
5. Lack of full-time staff who could carry out the daily activities.
- ⑥ Members are very busy people who lack time to attend to some of its most important activities.
7. Lack full support from top policy makers and planners.
8. Lack of materials for policy makers, planners and practitioners.
- ⑨ Lack of knowledge among paper writers and other non-members on how to use the services of SEABAS.

10. Lack of incentives for paper writers.
11. Lack of systematic procedures in the production, exchange and dissemination of materials.
12. Lack of specific guidelines for paper writers.
13. Limited to small studies in education which are not sufficient for formulating policies.
14. Lack of linkages with policy makers, planners and practitioners organization.
15. Weak organizational structure.
16. Lack of clear plan for institutionalization and sustainability.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

The main focus of this study is the institutionalization and consequently the sustainability of SEARRAG as an organization.

Institutionalization is considered as an approach to sustainability. The hypothesis is that an organization like SEARRAG will become sustainable if it is institutionalized.

Institutionalization refers to the process of developing an independent organization into a permanent unit of an institution so that the former is assured of funds on a continuing basis to continue performing its functions.

Sustainability refers to the ability of an organization to survive, grow and develop in order to continue to perform its functions and to meet its objectives.

This chapter answers this basic question: What type of organization should SEARRAG be to become sustainable but at the same time maintain or even improve its existing durable attributes?

To answer this question, three things are taken into consideration: 1) classification of organizations, 2) attributes of each of these organizations, and 3) SEARRAG's choice based on these attributes.

Types of Organization

Basically, there are three types of organizations which SEARRAG could choose from:

- Private
- Semi-Private or Semi-Government
- Government

The first is run by a private group or legally run by a private group. Its operation is funded by the group through its services.

The second is run by a group composed of private individuals and government officials. Its operation is partly funded by government and its income is earned through services.

The third is purely run by a group of government officials. The organization is financed through a regular annual budget from the government.

Image of Organizations

Organizations are known to have their own public "image". This image may be based on people's perception. Often, perception is developed out of what

people hear, see, or experience. Therefore, there is always some "grain of truth" to images.

The image of an organization is very important to its identity, institutionalization and sustainability.

In general, the image of an organization could be good or bad. A good organization has a positive identity. A plus identity makes institutionalization easier and sustainability surer. This is because funding sources want to support organizations which are publicly known to be very good in performing their functions.

The reality is that an organization should possess a number of desirable attributes or characteristics to earn a more lasting image. These attributes, some of which are already possessed by SEARRAG, include the following:

- Financial security or assurance of continuous funding
- Efficiency or timeliness in producing outputs according to plan
- Effectiveness or attainment of a set of objectives
- Relevance of technology or products and services provided to the users
- Competence or technical ability of its members
- Flexibility or ability of the organization to respond to changes in the environment
- Credibility or users' belief in the quality of its outputs
- Visibility or extent of which it is known to the public

These are only a few of the desirable characteristics of an organization but these might be the most important.

Organizational Attributes

The three types of organizations could now be described according to the eight attributes. Private organizations according to general belief, are known to be: highly flexible in adopting to changes in the environment; highly efficient in producing its outputs; highly effective in meeting its objectives; highly open to the selection of the most competent members; highly open to visibility; highly credible, but low financial security in the short-run; and low relevance of technology to government.

On the other hand, semi-government organizations are generally noted to be: moderately efficient in producing its outputs; moderately effective in meeting its objectives; moderately open to the selection of the most competent members; moderately flexible in adopting to changes in the environment; moderately open to high visibility; moderately high credibility; moderately high financial security; and high relevance of technologies produced to the users.

Finally, government agencies are generally notorious for: low efficiency in producing outputs; low effectiveness in meeting its objectives; low flexibility in adopting to changes in the environment; nearly close to the selection of the most

competent members; nearly close to high visibility; low credibility; high financial security; and high relevance of technologies produced to the users.

SEARRAG's Choice

Judging from the reactions of the SEARRAG members in the last Annual Meeting conducted in Brunei Darussalam on May 24-28, 1991, their first choice is for SEARRAG to remain as a private organization.

The option to be semi-government under the umbrella of either SEAMEO or ASEAN was not acceptable to the group.

To transform SEARRAG into a government entity was the least acceptable to the group.

For SEARRAG to finally decide to remain private does not automatically guarantee that it will possess the desirable attributes of the idealized private organization described earlier. While SEARRAG, as it is, already possesses some of the fine attributes of an ideal private organization, it has to work hard to fine-tune its structure management and operations. Recommendations on improving its characteristics are discussed in Chapter ____.

To remain private, SEARRAG's greatest challenge is sustainability. To continue to operate, it must receive funding through donation, grants through generation of projects and the provision of services, or a combination of these options.

SUSTAINABILITY

As a private organization, SEARRAG could remain as a corporation or transform itself into a foundation.

A corporation is taxed by the government because it is allowed to earn profit. On the other hand, a foundation is tax-free because it is not allowed to earn profit; although it is allowed to solicit tax free donations.

Initiatives

Either form, SEARRAG could achieve sustainability through the following initiatives:

1. Organize a Governing Board who can contribute not only knowledge and skills but also other resources such as funds, manpower, equipment and materials.
2. Expand membership in the Board to include planner; and broaden general membership to reach more users at the regional and national levels.
3. Organize a Regional Secretariat for SEARRAG and SEABAS with core full time staff who can plan programmes and package project proposals.

4. Develop a program which will answer the needs of regional and national government agencies, non-government organization and international organizations concerned with educational research.
5. Package projects on educational research reviews; training on indexing, abstracting, documentation, dissemination and utilization of research data in policy making, planning, development of materials, curriculum building.
6. Establish linkages with potential funding sources such as international and national organizations which are potential users of data.
7. Provide or add incentives to the Governing Board members such as; 1) free expenses and honoraria during meetings 2) free supply of materials produced by SEARRAG, opportunities for international consultancy, and 3) prestige.
8. Provide incentives to the General Members in the following forms: 1) free selected publications; 2) discount for buying SEARRAG materials; 3) discount for utilizing SEABAS services; 4) partial subsidy of expenses during meetings; 5) allowance for attending mini-meetings and conferences; 6) referral for consultancy, and 7) prestige.
9. Establish linkages with authors and publishers in the ASEAN region and other interested countries.
10. Establish a Trust Fund.

Establishing Trust Fund

SEARRAG needs to establish a Trust Fund. To be deposited in this Fund are incomes and/or amounts received by SEARRAG from support cost or excess of the approved project budget. Any other amounts in excess of receipts over actual expenses incurred in any activity (e.g., seminar-workshop, meetings), collections (or part of the collections) from sales of documents and other materials produced by SEARRAG could form part of the Trust Fund.

The balance of the Trust Receipt at the end of each calendar year may be used in the ensuing year as a special budget for its regular or special activities.

The Trust Fund requires close monitoring of incomes and/or savings, and other collections of SEARRAG (such as remittances of incomes generated from sale of documents in member countries, or member institutions).

Needed Inputs

The ability of SEARRAG to implement the various initiatives presupposes the presence of certain organizational inputs such as:

- Mandate, objectives, policies and regulations;
- Resources such as responsive organizational structure and competent staff who can generate project proposal; adequate facilities and needed equipment;

- Management and operating procedures to guide its internal operations and external linkages; and
- Efficient and effective manager who will provide clear direction on the utilization of the organization's resources and execution of its activities; and strengthen and broaden its national, regional and international linkages.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The major findings of this study are summarized below:

1. SEARRAG continue to provide forums where policy-makers, practitioners and researchers have the opportunity to exchange information on educational research findings, needs, and priorities. This has resulted into a very close working relationship among the three groups of SEARRAG members very rarely seen in international bodies. These activities have effectively forged very close working relationship and cooperation among the SEARRAG members.
2. SEARRAG continue to review educational researches in Southeast Asia. Initial outputs include a book of the research environment in the individual participating countries and the Southeast Asian region and the production of the state-of-the-practice and state-of-the-art papers. These papers have given readers a clear overview of the status of educational research in the region.
3. SEARRAG continue to establish links and network with regional and international Research Review and Advisory Groups (RRAGs) through attendance of regional and international meetings and conferences.
4. SEARRAG has also played advisory role to some regional educational institutions such as INNOTECH and RECSAM and international funding agencies such as IDRC.
5. SEARRAG use an informal and flexible organizational structure that has gradually become quite effective in managing the organization. Its decision making process is basically ASEAN, which is based on consensus.
6. SEARRAG operational efficiency in documentation and dissemination of educational research is low. Production of papers rarely meet deadlines and dissemination of these papers need systematic procedures, to make sure that these reach their intended readers.
7. The reach and utilization of SEARRAG printed materials is virtually limited to its members, particularly among researchers to whom these materials were written. Materials tailor made for policy makers, planners and practitioners are wanting.
8. The utilization of SEABAS services outside of the country where it is based is almost non-existent because its presence, location and services are virtually unknown to non-members of SEARRAG.
9. The most prominent strength of SEARRAG is its highly competent and closely knit professional members.

10. Its most serious problem are its lack of visibility and therefore virtually unknown outside of the circle of its members; and lack of sustained financial support for its continuous survival and growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the major findings of the study, the following recommendations are presented:

1. SEARRAG should continue to hold forums which will now promote the organization so that it will be known beyond the confines of ~~its~~ members.
2. SEARRAG should now shift toward the production of materials for policy-makers, planners and practitioners. These materials should use standardized size, format and style.
3. SEARRAG should continue to broaden and deepen its linkages with other networks such as those whose members are researchers, policy makers and practitioners and consider these as target readers of its materials. It should also open its affiliate memberships to broaden the base of the organization at the national level.
4. SEARRAG should continue to play the advisory role to related regional and international organizations so that its presence should be more widely felt in the region.
5. SEARRAG should maintain the flexibility, effectivity and harmony within its organizational structure but must build and maintain a more stable organization structure such as a permanent regional secretariat which could run its activities on a more regular basis.
6. SEARRAG should strengthen its documentation capability through training of young promising paper writers and by harnessing the expertise of existing policy makers, planners, and media people who possess the skill in synthesizing educational research.
7. SEARRAG should design, install and operate a systematic dissemination system for its materials to ensure that these reach increasing number of target audiences at the national, regional and international levels.
8. SEARRAG should conduct training programs on educational research data utilization in policy making, planning and practice.
9. SEARRAG should publicize the presence, location and services of SEABAS to the various participating countries.
10. SEARRAG, in the long run, should try to reach top professional planners and policy makers both at the agency level and the policy making body in the participating countries.
11. SEARRAG should participate in international events with the end of view of broadening the visibility of the organization to various targets.

12. SEARRAG should harness the expertise of retired prominent educational researchers, policy makers, planners and practitioners.
13. SEARRAG should maintain the desired legal personality of the organization. However, its organizational structure at the regional level should establish a more stable and efficient secretariat with full-time staff.
14. SEARRAG must work hard to secure funding support of bilateral and multilateral agencies and government agencies. This fund should be converted into an endowment fund and deposited in a bank. Only the interest should be used to maintain the operation of SEARRAG.
15. SEARRAG should approach agencies which could help construct a building and academic institution which could provide the land. The building should be designed to have enough facilities for rent so that it could generate more funds to sustain the operation of the organization.
16. SEARRAG should go into other income generating activities such as sale of publications and SEABAS packaged information, it should also go into training and consultancy.
17. SEARRAG should establish linkages with authors and publishers in the ASEAN region and other interested countries, so that research data could be used for textbook writing and other resource materials.
18. SEARRAG should develop programs which will contribute to: a) national and regional development; b) development of educational research, policy, planning and practice; c) its own organizational development.